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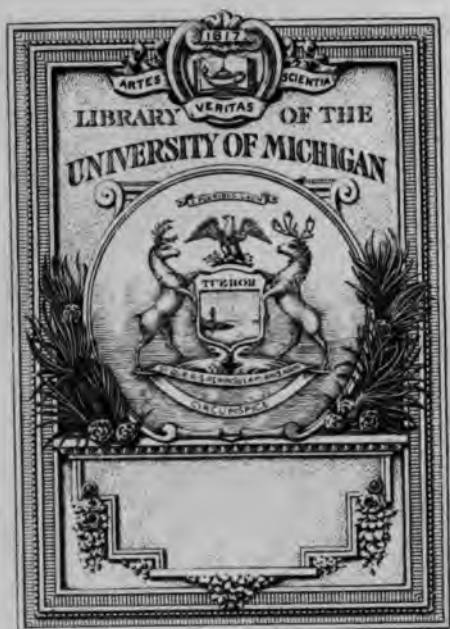
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THE  
REPUBLIC OF PLATO

BOOK VII

TRANSLATED BY  
ALEXANDER KERR  
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# THE REPUBLIC

## BOOK VII

SOCRATES AND GLAUCON.

I. "Now, then," I resumed, "in order to discover 514  
our natural condition in respect of knowledge and ignorance, figure to yourself a situation which I may thus represent. Imagine a company of men living in a sort of underground cave-like dwelling which has an entrance open to the light of day, long-drawn, and answering in width to the whole of the cave; and in this cave they are detained from childhood, with their legs and necks so fettered that they cannot change their position and can see only what is in front of them, being unable, by reason of the chains, to turn round their heads. And further, imagine them to have light from a fire which is burning above, and at a distance behind them. Between the fire and the prisoners there rises a roadway along which fancy that you can see a low wall built, like the screen which the jugglers place in front of them, and over which they show their puppets."

"I see," said Glaucon.

"Figure to yourself also a number of people who are carrying behind this wall statues of men and images of various animals, wrought in wood, stone,

515 and in every possible fashion, and other articles of every sort which overtop the wall; and, as you might suppose, some of those who are carrying these objects are talking, others silent."

"You are showing me," he said, "a strange picture, and these are strange prisoners."

"They are like ourselves," I replied. "For, to begin with, do you believe that people thus situated could ever see anything else of themselves, or of one another, save the shadows which the fire casts upon the side of the cave directly facing them?"

"How could they," he replied, "since all their lives they were compelled to keep their heads immovable?"

"And what about the objects which are carried past behind them? Of these would they see only the shadows?"

"Undoubtedly."

"If now they could talk together, don't you suppose they would believe that they were naming as the things themselves the figures which they saw passing before them?"

"Of necessity they would."

"Well, how about this? If their prison had an echo from the side in front of them, do you think that, whenever one of the passers-by spoke, they would imagine the voice to come from anything save the passing shadow?"

"I certainly do not," he replied.

"So that in point of fact," I said, "such people would hold nothing to be real except the shadows of the images."

"True, beyond all question."

"Consider now," I proceeded, "what would be the result of their release from chains and the cure of their delusion if a deliverance of this kind came to them. Suppose one of them should be unbound and should be compelled all of a sudden to rise and turn round his head, to walk and look up at the light; suppose further that in doing all this he suffered pain, and was unable, on account of the brightness, to look at the objects of which in his former position he saw the shadows. Tell me what you think he would say if any one assured him that heretofore he had been looking at illusions, but that now, as he is coming a little nearer to reality, and has his eye turned toward things more real, he sees more truly; furthermore if his instructor, while pointing out each object as it passes, should question him, and constrain him to say what it is; don't you suppose he would be embarrassed and believe what he formerly saw to be more real than what was now pointed out to him?"

"Yes, far more real."

II. "And if he were forced to look at the light itself, would he not, think you, suffer pain in his eyes, and would he not turn back and take refuge in those things which he was able to look upon, and

think them in reality clearer than the objects shown him?"

"Quite so."

"If now some one were to drag him by force out of the den up the rough and steep ascent, and should not let him loose until he had drawn him on into the light of the sun, don't you suppose, while he was thus dragged along, he would be pained and angered, and, on coming into the sun-  
516 light would not his eyes be so dazzled by the brilliancy that he would be unable to see a single one of the things which are now called real?"

"Certainly he could see nothing for a moment at least."

"So then, I think, habituation will be necessary if his eyes are to distinguish objects in the upper world. At first he would most easily make out shadows, next the reflections in water of men and of other objects, and after that the objects themselves; and then he will fix his eyes on the light of the moon and stars, finding it easier to look by night at the things in the heavens and the heavens themselves than at the sun and the light of the sun by day."

"No doubt."

"And last of all he will be able, I suppose, to see the sun, not in the water, or wherever its image is reflected, but he will look upon the true sun in its own appointed place, and will behold it as it is."

"Certainly."

"After this he will proceed to reason out that

it is the sun which gives the seasons and the years, which dominates all things in the visible world, and is somehow the cause of all those things which he and his fellow-prisoners used to see."

"It is evident that by such steps as these he would reach this conclusion."

"Well, then, when he remembered his former dwelling, the wisdom of the cave, and his comrades in captivity, don't you believe he would deem himself happy in the change and would pity the others?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And in case it were the traditional usage of the prisoners to receive honors and commendations from one another, and to bestow prizes on him who was keenest to observe the passing shadows, and who remembered best which of them were wont to precede and which to follow and which to pass together, and in consequence was best able to foretell what was to come next, do you suppose he would be eager for these distinctions, and envious of those who are held in honor and exercise authority among them? Or would he find himself in the Homeric situation, and would it not be the case that far more willingly

'He would live on the earth and serve in the house of another,  
Slave to a landless man,'<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The quotation from the *Odyssey*, XI, 489, has a curious felicity, being the words of Achilles in expressing his detestation of the world of shades (lit. shadows) in com-

and would endure anything rather than hold his former opinions and live the life of the den?"

"Yes," he said, "I have no doubt he would prefer to suffer anything rather than go on living in that way."

"Now consider this also," said I: "Suppose such a man were to descend a second time into the cavern and seat himself in his old place, would he not, on passing so suddenly out of the sunlight, get his eyes full of darkness?"

"Yes, he certainly would."

517 "But if now he were compelled once more to engage in a guessing-contest on these shadows, with those who had never been released from chains, while his sight was still blurred, and his eyes not yet adjusted to the obscurity—(and if the process of habituation lasted a considerable time), would he not, think you, provoke the laughter of his companions? Would they not declare that, owing to his visit to the upper world, he had come back with his eyesight ruined, and that the ascent was not worth even the attempt? And if any one tried to release them and lead them up to the light, in case they could only get him into their power, they would put him to death, would they not?"\*

"Doubtless they would," said he.

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pariaon with the world of human life." (Bosanquet.)  
Compare Book III, Note 2.

\* Another manifest reference to the fate of Socrates,  
Compare Book VI, Note 13.

III. "Now this entire parable," I said, "my dear Glaucon, you must apply to our former statements. The visible world is the prison house, the light of the fire in the cavern is the power of the sun; and if you will regard the upward journey and the contemplation of things above as the ascent of the soul to the realm of thought, you will not misapprehend my surmise, since you desire to hear it, though whether it be true or not, God alone knows. Yet, as for me, my belief may be given in this way: in the world of knowledge the idea of good comes to light last of all and is with difficulty perceived, but when it is perceived, we must infer about it that it is for all the source of all things right and beautiful, in the visible world the parent of light and of the lord of light, in the realm of thought appearing as the direct and supreme giver of truth and reason; and in fine on this idea must be fixed the earnest eyes of the man who would conduct himself rationally either in public or in private life."

"I agree with you as far as I am able to understand."

"Pray then," I continued, "concede another point, and do not wonder that those who have attained to this height are unwilling to take a part in the affairs of men; but their souls ever aspire after the upper world, to linger there. For this is surely natural, if the present instance,<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Socrates is thinking of that part of the allegory in which he says the escaped prisoner "would rather be the

no less than the others, applies to our allegory."

"Yes, quite natural," he said.

"Is it then, do you think, at all surprising that a person, who turns from the contemplation of things divine to the miseries of men, makes but a poor figure and appears quite ridiculous, if, while his sight is still dim, and before he has become thoroughly habituated to the surrounding darkness, he is forced to contend in law courts or elsewhere about the shadows of justice or the images which cast these shadows, and to dispute thereon about the opinions of those who have never had a vision of absolute justice?"

"Not in the least surprising," he replied.

518 "On the contrary," I proceeded, "a man of sense will remember that disturbances of the eyes are of two kinds and come from two opposite causes, the transition from light to darkness, and from darkness to light, but holding the same to be true of the mind's eye, when he observes any one whose soul is perplexed and unable to see distinctly, he will not laugh immoderately; he will rather inquire whether that soul has returned from a brighter life and is blinded from being unaccustomed to the darkness, or in passing from a deeper ignorance into greater brightness it has been dazzled by excess of radiance. And the first he will deem happy in its experience and manner of life, and he will pity the second; or if he is inclined to

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hiring of a landless man than hold his former opinions and live the life of the den." 516 D. See note 7

laugh at this soul, his laughter will be less ridiculous than that which assails him who redescends from the world of light."

"Nothing could be more fitly spoken."

IV. "If then," I said, "all this is true, we must reach the conclusion about the subject in hand that education is not what some of its professors declare it to be. For they say, I believe, that they can put knowledge into the soul, where it did not exist before, just as if they could put sight into blind eyes."

"Yes, they proclaim their ability to do this," he replied.

"Whereas, our present argument shows that there exists already in the soul of every one a faculty, and an instrument by which each of us can acquire knowledge; and that, just as (in our parable) the eye was unable to turn from darkness to light save with the whole body; so also must this instrument of knowledge be turned along with the entire soul from the world of becoming to the world of being until it is able to endure the contemplation of being and the brightest part of being. And this, we say, is the good, do we not?"

"Yes."

"Hence education is not an art of putting sight

into the soul's eye, where it is already, although not rightly directed or looking where it should, but an art of turning round this very eye in the easiest and most effectual manner, so that it may gain the perfect vision."

"Yes, so it appears," he replied.

"Now the other so-called virtues of the soul seem to be in a way akin to those of the body, since, as a matter of fact, they are not originally present in the soul, but are afterwards implanted there by habit and exercise; whereas the virtue of wisdom, unless I am mistaken, partakes of something far more divine, which never loses its power, but by conversion becomes useful and beneficent, 519 or, on the other hand, useless and hurtful. Consider one of those persons who are generally held to be clever rogues. Have you never observed what extraordinary penetration his shriveled soul has, how keen he is to see through the things to which his attention is turned, thus proving that, while his power of vision is well-nigh faultless, he is compelled to make it the servant of wickedness, so that the more sharply he sees, so much the more evil he works?"

"Yes, that is indeed true."

"But if now," I proceeded, "this soul bearing the impress of such a nature had from childhood been stripped and shorn of all things akin to what is transitory, which, like leaden weights, cling round it, these pleasures of the table and such like indulgences, and which turn downward the eye of the soul; if, I say, it had been delivered from these

encumbrances and had been turned toward the truth, the selfsame faculty of the clever rogue would have seen this quite as clearly as he sees that to which his eyes are now turned."

"Very likely," he said.

"Again, is not this a natural, nay, even a necessary inference from what was said before, that neither those who are uneducated and unacquainted with the truth, nor those who are permitted to spend their whole life upon their studies, will ever be able guardians of a state; the former because they have no distinct aim in life with an eye to which they perform all their duties both private and public, the latter because they will render no service without compulsion, fancying that while they still live they have been translated to the Islands of the Blest?"

"Very true," he replied.

"Then," I said, "it is the task of us who are founders of the State to compel the most gifted minds to attain that knowledge which we have already declared to be supreme, to look upon the good, and to accomplish the upward journey we spoke of; but when they have made the ascent, and have contemplated the good for a reasonable space, we must refuse to grant them the liberty which is at present allowed them."

"What is that?"

"To remain in that upper world," I said, "and decline to come down again to the prisoners of the den, and to share in their toils and honors, whether worthless or desirable."

"What!" he asked, "shall we wrong them, and make them live a worse life, when it is in their power to live a better?"

V. "You have again forgotten," I said, "my friend, that it is not the purpose of the law to make any one class in the State happy above all others,<sup>4</sup> but that it aims to secure the happiness of all, uniting the citizens by persuasion and compulsion, making them share with one another the benefits  
520 which they can severally confer upon the common weal; that the law itself creates such citizens in the State, not to leave them free to pursue each his own way, but to use them for binding the State together."

"Quite true," he replied; "I had forgotten."

"Furthermore observe, my dear Glaucon," I continued, "that after all we shall be doing no wrong to those among us who are philosophers but shall be telling them what is right when we persuade them to care for and protect their fellow citizens. For we shall tell them that in other states it is reasonable that men of their stamp should take no part in the labors of public life; for they spring up of their own free will, with the government in each case opposed to them. Now it is fair that the plant of natural growth, which owes its cul-

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<sup>4</sup> Compare Book IV beginning.

ture to no one, should not be eager to pay the price of its culture to any one. But you we have called into being for the profit of yourselves and of the whole State as well, to be, so to speak, leaders and monarchs of the hive; to this end, we have given you a better and more complete education which enables you more perfectly than the others to combine the study of philosophy with the conduct of affairs. Therefore you must each in his turn go down to the dwelling-place of the others and acquire the habit of looking upon the darkness. For when you have once grown accustomed to it, you will see infinitely better than the people of the den the several images, and discern their nature and origin, because you have seen the truth of whatsoever things are beautiful, just and good. And thus it shall be our lot and yours to find that our State is a waking reality, and not a dream, like many states of the present day where men are fighting about shadows and contending for power as though that were a mighty good. Whereas the truth is, I suppose, that the State in which those destined to rule are least eager for authority must be best and most peaceably governed, while the worst government will be found in the state which gets ambitious rulers."

"Perfectly true," he replied.

"And when our pupils hear this, will they, think you, disobey us, and refuse to take part, turn and turn about, in public affairs, choosing rather to pass the greater part of their time together in the region of pure light?"

"Impossible," he answered; "for we shall impose just commands upon men who are just. On the contrary, each of them will doubtless come to his post of authority, looking on it as a necessity, not at all after the manner of those who now hold office in each state."

"Yes, my friend," I said, "this is the truth of the case. If for those who are destined to be rulers  
521 you can discover a life which is better than ruling, then it may be possible for you to have a well-ordered State; for only in such a State will men hold sway who are truly rich, not in gold, but in the treasure which the happy man must possess,—a wise and virtuous life. But if men who are poor and starving for lack of goods of their own enter upon the public service, fancying that it is from thence that their good must be snatched, stable government is impossible. For when the possession of power becomes an object of strife, the civil and domestic conflicts which follow will prove the destruction of the rulers themselves and of the whole State."

"That is most true," he replied.

"And do you know any other kind of life which inspires contempt of political power, except the life of true philosophy?"

"I certainly do not."

"Again, it must not be lovers of power<sup>5</sup> who are to woo her, otherwise, their eagerness for the prize will bring on a battle of rivals."

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<sup>5</sup> Observe the personification.

"It must be so."

"Who then are the men whom you will compel to assume the guardianship of the State? Are they other than those who have the most profound knowledge of that science by which a State is best administered, and who, at the same time, have honors and a life better than the life of politics?"

"They, and no others, are the men," he replied.

VI. "Are you willing then that we should now consider how men of this character are to arise in the State, and by what means we are to bring them up out of the darkness into the light, as certain heroes are said to have ascended from Hades to the abodes of the gods?"

"Can you doubt that I am willing?"

"This then, as it seems, is not the mere flipping up of a copper,<sup>6</sup> but the turning round of a soul from a day which is as night to the true day, that is, the ascent into being; and this process we shall affirm to be true philosophy."

"Quite so."

"Should we then inquire which of the branches of study has the power to produce such an effect?"

"Certainly we should."

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<sup>6</sup> The literal translation of the Greek is "the turning over of an oyster-shell." The reference is to an ancient method of playing "Heads or Tails."

"What then, my dear Glaucon, is the kind of knowledge which would advance the soul from becoming to being? But, while I am speaking, this is brought to mind: Did we not certainly say<sup>†</sup> that our rulers, in the days of their youth, must be warrior athletes?"

"Yes, we said that."

"Then the study which we are seeking for must include this as well as the former?"

"What is it?"

"The quality of usefulness to warriors."

"It must indeed," he said, "if the thing is possible."

"Well, we have already<sup>‡</sup> included music and gymnastic in our scheme of education."

"Yes, we have."

"Now gymnastic has to do with what is changeable and perishable; for it presides over the growth and waste of the body."

"So it appears."

522 "This then is not the science which we are seeking for."

"Certainly not."

"But would this haply be music<sup>§</sup> as far as we formerly discussed it?"

"Nay," he replied, "music so far considered was, if you remember, merely the counterpart of gym-

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<sup>†</sup> Compare Book III, 403 E.

<sup>‡</sup> In Book II, 376 E ff.

<sup>§</sup> See Book II, Note 18. In the *Phaedo* 61 A philosophy is spoken of as the highest music.

nastic, and trained the guardians by the aid of habit, by means of harmony rendering them harmonious, and by means of rhythm, rhythmical, but not imparting science; and the words too which it employed, whether they were fabulous or, on the other hand, true, contained like qualities of harmony and rhythm. But in music there was nothing useful for the attainment of the good which is now the object of your search."

"Very accurately," I replied, "you have brought to my mind what we said: Music had really nothing of the sort to give. But, my dear Glaucon, where is the good which we are seeking to be found? For all the useful arts, I believe, we looked upon as ignoble."<sup>10</sup>

"To be sure; and yet if we exclude music, gymnastic and the arts, what else is there still left to learn?"

"Well," I said, "if we can find nothing exclusive of these, let us take some science of universal application."

"Pray what, for example, might that be?"

"That one which is so common that all arts, modes of thinking and sciences employ it, and which every one must first learn as the groundwork of education."

"What is it?" he asked.

"I mean that slight matter of distinguishing one, two and three; in brief, I call it number and cal-

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<sup>10</sup> In Book III, 395-6.

culatation: is it not true that every art and science must of necessity partake of them?"

"Quite true."

"Well, now, does not the art of war also partake of them?"

"Beyond a doubt it does."

"At any rate," I said, "in the tragedies Palamedes always represents Agamemnon as a ridiculous general. Or have you not observed that he claims, by the invention of number,<sup>11</sup> to have marshalled the troops in his camp before Troy and to have counted the ships and all other things, as if up to that time such an enumeration could not have been made, and as if Agamemnon did not know how many feet he had, which would be the fact if he could not count? Well, what kind of a general would Agamemnon be in that case, think you?"

"A very strange one, in my opinion, if the account were true."

VII. "Shall we then conclude," said I, "that the ability also to reckon and count is an attainment absolutely necessary to a warrior?"

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<sup>11</sup> In Æschylus (P. V. 459) the invention of number is ascribed to Prometheus. Elsewhere in the dramatic poets to Palamedes.

"Certainly it is indispensable if he is to have even the slightest knowledge of military tactics, or rather if he is to be a human being."

"And do you entertain the same opinion as I do about this study?"

"What is your opinion?"

"This study appears to be one of the aids which we are seeking, and which naturally lead the soul 523 to reflection, but no one apparently employs it rightly, as a thing entirely suited to draw us toward the contemplation of being."

"Tell me what you mean," he said.

"I will try," I said, "to show you my opinion. And do you join me in considering those subjects which I distinguish as suited or not suited, to lead us to the end proposed, and then give or withhold your assent, so that we may see more clearly whether the science of number is such a thing as I imagine it to be."

"Explain your meaning," he said.

"I will show you then," I answered, "if you are pleased to give heed, this difference in sense-perceptions: some of them do not provoke the intellect to reflection because the sense is a competent judge of them; whereas others of them powerfully stimulate it to farther inquiry, since the sense is found to be utterly untrustworthy."

"You are speaking, no doubt," he said, "of the impressions made by objects seen at a distance, and of sketching in light and shade."

"You have not quite hit my meaning," I answered.

"What then is your meaning?" he asked.

"I regard as not provoking the intellect to reflection all that which does not give us two opposite sensations at the same time; and I hold as stimulating reflection whatever excites two opposite reflections when the report of the senses does not pronounce an object to be of a given kind rather than something else quite the opposite, whether the object making an impression on the senses is near or remote. You will understand more perfectly what I mean from this illustration: Here, we say, you have three fingers, the little finger, the second, and the middle finger."

"Quite true," he said.

"Well, suppose me to be speaking of them when they are seen hard by: Now join me in noting this point respecting them."

"What point?"

"Each of them appears equally a finger; and, in this respect, it is no matter whether the one that is seen be in the middle or at the extremity, whether it be white or black, thick or thin, and so forth. For in these circumstances the ordinary mind is never forced to ask of thought the question what is a finger? because at no stage in the process has sight at the same moment informed the mind that the finger is anything else than a finger."

"Certainly not," he replied.

"I might then reasonably say that in a case like this there is nothing to excite or awaken reflection."

"Yes."

"But what about the comparative greatness or smallness of these fingers? Does sight accurately distinguish this point, and is it a matter of indifference to it whether one of them is in the middle or at the extremity? And in like manner does touch accurately distinguish thickness and thinness, hardness and softness? And is not the report of the other senses upon all such matters quite defective? Or does not each of them behave in this way—to begin with, the sense designed to determine what is hard can reach its decision only after determining what is soft, and it reports to the soul that the same thing is both hard and soft when it perceives this to be the case?" 524

"Quite so."

"And is it not then inevitable that under such circumstances the soul should be perplexed as to what this present sensation means by *hard*, when it reports the same thing as being also soft? And must not the soul be in doubt as to what the sensation of light and the sensation of heavy mean by light and heavy, if they report the one that the heavy is light and the other that the light is heavy?"

"Yes," he said, "these communications must appear remarkable to the soul, and they will require careful consideration."

"Naturally then," I said, "in such instances the soul first calls in the aid of calculation and reflection seeking to determine whether each of the matters announced is one or two."

"No doubt."

"And if they appear to be two, will not each of them be one and distinct from the other?"

"Yes."

"If then each of them appears one, and both together two, she will think of the two as different from each other; for if they were undivided, they could only be conceived of as one, not as two."

"You are right."

"Sight also, we say, beheld a great and a small as things not separate, but confused together; is it not so?"

"Yes."

"But to clear up this confusion, reflection, on the other hand, was obliged to see a great and a small not confounded together but distinguished, which is the very opposite of what sight beheld."

"That is true."

"Is it not then from some experience of this kind that we are first led to inquire, 'What after all is great and what is small?'"

"Surely it is."

"And thus we distinguished between the intelligible and the visible."

"True beyond all question."

VIII. "This then is what I was just now trying to make you understand when I said that some sensations are suited to provoke thought. meaning

those which make contrary impressions upon the senses at the same time, while other sensations do not awaken reflection, since they do not involve such contradictions."

"Now I understand," he said, "and agree with you."

"Well; to which of these two classes do you refer number and unity?"

"I cannot decide," he answered.

"Well then, let what we have already said help you to reach a decision. If we gain a sufficient knowledge of simple unity by the sight or any other sense, as in the case of the finger we just now mentioned, there would be nothing in this experience to draw the mind toward being; but if unity always presents at the same time some contradiction, so that it shall appear to be no more unity than the opposite of unity, there will then be need of an arbiter to decide; the soul in such a case is necessarily perplexed, and inwardly arousing thought, is forced to pursue further inquiries and to ask herself this question, 'What of a truth is unity in itself?' And thus the study of the unit will be one 525 of the agencies that lead and turn the soul to the contemplation of true being."

"And surely," he said, "this is precisely what happens in the visual perception of unity; for at the same moment we see the same object to be one and multiplied to infinity."

"If then this is true in the case of unity, is it not equally true of all numbers whatsoever they may be?"

"It must be so."

"But surely calculation and arithmetic have to do exclusively with number."

"No doubt."

"And these, apparently, lead us towards truth."

"Yes, in a wonderful way."

"We may then, as it appears, include them among the studies which we are seeking for. Indeed a knowledge of them is indispensable to the military man in marshalling his troops; to the philosopher as well, because he must rise above what is transitory and lay hold of true being; otherwise he can never become a real arithmetician."

"That is certain."

"But our guardian is at once a soldier and a philosopher."

"No doubt he is."

"It will be proper then, my dear Glaucon, to make the study of this subject a legal requirement, and to persuade those who are destined to occupy the highest official stations in the State to devote themselves to the science of reckoning, not in any superficial method, but to persevere until, by dint of sheer reflection, they come to look at the nature of numbers; to use them, not after the manner of merchants and shopkeepers, in buying and selling, but to apply them to the science of war, and to assist the soul herself in rising from transitory things toward truth and being."

"Admirably spoken."

"And verily," I said, "seeing we have entered upon the discussion of this science which treats of

calculation, I have but just now discovered how elegant it is, and in how many ways it promotes the attainment of our end, provided one pursues it as a seeker after knowledge, and not as a shopkeeper."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"I mean, as we were just saying, that this science gives a powerful upward impulse, compelling the soul to reason about numbers themselves, absolutely declining the discussion when any one proposes to bring into the argument numbers which relate to visible or tangible objects. For you doubtless know that the expert arithmeticians ridicule and reject the attempt of any one, while computing, to divide unity itself; but as often as you divide it they multiply it for fear the unit should ever appear not one, but as a combination of many parts."

"Perfectly true."

"And suppose, Glaucon, a person were to say to them: 'Admirable men, about what kind of numbers are you speaking? Where are the numbers in which there is a unity such as you require, where each unit is perfectly equal to every other, showing not the slightest difference, and admitting no division into parts?' What do you believe they would answer?"

"They will reply, I believe, that they are speaking of numbers which are not objects of sense, and which cannot be apprehended otherwise than by the mind."

"Do you see then, my friend," I said, "that we cannot absolutely forego this science, since it mani-

festly compels the soul to employ the pure intelligence in the quest of pure truth?"

"Yes," he replied; "it is certainly a powerful agent in bringing this about."

"Have you also observed this, that born calculators apply themselves with great facility to almost all kinds of learning; and even the sluggish minds, if they are trained and exercised in this science, though they derive no other advantage from it, yet they always make such progress as to gain keener insight than they had before?"

"That is certain."

"And further, as I think, you will not easily find many sciences which cost more toil in acquiring and practising than this."

"No, indeed."

"Then, for all these reasons we cannot give up this study, but the best endowed minds must be trained in it."

"I agree with you."

IX. "Therefore, let this study," I continued, "be chosen as one part of our education. But in the next place let us consider whether the subject which is closely related to arithmetic is suited to our purpose or not."

"What is that? Do you mean geometry?"

"The very same," I replied.

"Manifestly," he said, "geometry does concern us, as far as it is related to the operations of war. For in pitching a camp, or taking possession of strongholds, in closing up or extending the lines of an army, and in executing all the evolutions which are employed in battle and in marching, it will make every difference to the general whether he is, or is not a geometrician."

"Yes," I answered, "but for all such purposes a slight knowledge of geometry and calculation will be sufficient. But the question to be considered is whether the principal and more advanced part of geometry has a tendency to promote our chief end, to enable the mind with greater ease to contemplate the idea of good. And thither, we may say, tend all the sciences which compel the soul to turn herself towards that region where dwells the most blessed part of being which the soul must, by all means, contemplate."

"Rightly spoken," he replied.

"If, therefore, geometry compels the soul to contemplate the essence of things, it concerns us, but if it limits her vision to what is transitory and perishable, it does not concern us."

"Yes, that is what we maintain."

"Very well," I said, "the man who has ac- 527  
quired even a smattering of geometry will not contradict us on one point at least, our assertion that this science has nothing in common with the language of those who practise it."

"How so?" he asked.

"They make use of a truly ridiculous and pov-

erty-stricken language.<sup>12</sup> For they speak of squaring, applying, adding and the like, as if they were engaged in some industrial pursuits, and all their demonstrations had a practical end in view; whereas, the whole aim and object of this science is knowledge."

"That is undoubtedly true."

"Must not this point also be conceded?"

"What point?"

"That geometry aims at the knowledge of what always is, and not of what is successively becoming somewhat and perishing."

"That is readily conceded: geometrical knowledge certainly deals with what eternally exists."

"Then, my excellent friend, geometry will have a tendency to attract the soul toward truth, and to create the philosophic spirit, thus helping us to raise aloft what<sup>13</sup> we now perversely turn down."

"Indeed," he said, "as an aid to the attainment of this end there is nothing more effective than geometry."

"Therefore nothing," I said, "should be more earnestly urged than that the inhabitants of your model State should not neglect geometry. For even the incidental advantages of the science are not slight."

"What are they?" he asked.

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<sup>12</sup> In contrast with the riches of philosophic speech. Compare Galatians IV, 9. *How turn ye back again to the weak and beggarly rudiments?*

<sup>13</sup> The eye of the soul.

"In the first place," I said, "it has the advantages you spoke of, which relate to war. But next and chiefly it prepares the mind to gain a clearer apprehension of the other sciences; and we doubtless know that in respect of such apprehension there will be a world of difference between him who is conversant with geometry and him who is not."

"Yes, indeed," he said, "there is certainly a world of difference between them."

"Shall we then fix upon this as a second study for our young men?"

"Let us do so," he replied.

X. "Well, shall we make astronomy the third science? or what do you think about it?"

"I altogether approve," he said. "For in my opinion an exact knowledge of the time of the month and the time of the year is no less essential to the warrior than to the farmer and the pilot."

"You amuse me," I said, "by your evident dread of the multitude, lest they think you are proposing the study of useless sciences. Whereas it is a thing of no slight moment, but difficult to believe, that these studies purify and rekindle in the soul of every man a faculty blinded and, as it were, extinguished by the other occupations of life, a faculty whose preservation is far more precious

than that of ten thousand eyes, for by it alone is truth beheld. Now when you say this, those who hold the same opinions will give your words unqualified approval; while those who have never given the subject a thought will naturally believe your reasoning to be the merest folly; for, aside from the practical application of these sciences, they see no profit in them which is worth considering. Make up your mind then at once to which of the two classes you are directing your arguments; or  
528 are you addressing your words to neither, but reasoning principally on your own account, without grudging any advantage which others may derive from the conversation?"

"Yes, it is thus, Socrates; it is chiefly for my own sake that I desire to converse, to ask, and to answer."

"Then let us retrace our steps," I said, "for we were wrong just now when we named the science which should come next after geometry."

"Why, what was the mistake?" he asked.

"We have passed from the consideration of plane surfaces to take up the subject of solids already in revolution before dealing with solids in themselves. Whereas the right order is, after the second increase, to proceed next to the third; and this, I believe, has to do with cubic increase and whatever partakes of thickness."

"True, Socrates," he said; "but these subjects, I think, are as yet imperfectly understood."

"Yes," I replied, "and for two reasons. In the first place because no state holds them in honor

there is lack of vigor in the study of them, and they are difficult. In the second place, those who pursue these studies would require a leader without whom their investigations would be useless. Now, to discover such a person is no easy task; and, in the event of finding him, as things now are, those who are engaged in these researches would be too presumptuous to obey him. But if a whole state were to honor his labors and become his patron (for the advancement of learning), these students would coöperate with him, and by reason of concerted and sustained efforts the true nature of the science would be brought to light. For even now despised and obstructed, as it is, by the vulgar, and by its votaries, who have no comprehension of its real worth, yet, in spite of all these obstacles, by virtue of its inherent charms, it makes progress, and there is nothing surprising in its gaining the prominent place which it now holds."

"Indeed," he said, "the subject possesses a remarkable fascination. But tell me more clearly what you meant just now. For, I believe, you defined geometry as the study of plane surfaces."

"Yes, I did."

"You then placed astronomy immediately after geometry; but afterwards you retraced your steps."

"Yes," I said, "in my eagerness to cover the whole ground swiftly I make less headway. For, while the investigation of increase in depth was next in order, taking into account the crude state of this study, I passed it by, and after geometry, spoke of astronomy, or solids in motion."

"You are right," he replied.

"Let us therefore assign to astronomy the fourth place in our scheme of studies, assuming that the real existence of the science at present omitted<sup>14</sup> will be assured whenever the State shall give it due recognition."

"That stands to reason," he replied. "And now, Socrates, since you reproached me for my recent awkward attempt at praising astronomy, my praise shall be conformed to your ideas. For I think it  
529 is clear to every one that astronomy compels the soul to look aloft and leads us away from the earth to the contemplation of things in the heavens."

"Probably," I said, "that is evident to every one except myself; but as for me, I dissent from the common opinion."

"Why, what is your opinion?" he asked.

"That astronomy as now pursued by those who would lead us upwards to philosophy really makes the soul look downwards."

"What do you mean?"

"With a fine confidence you seem to me to be forming your conception of the real nature of that knowledge which has to do with things above. For at this rate, if a man were to throw his head back and examine the decorations of the ceiling, you would doubtless think he was taking them in with his mind and not with his eyes. Very likely now your impression is the right one, but my own

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<sup>14</sup> A fuller and clearer treatment of solid geometry is reserved for *Timæus*, 54 A ff.

absurd. But for my part I cannot think any other study one that makes the soul look upwards save that which deals with the real and the unseen. And if any one attempts to learn by the senses aught that is perceivable, no matter whether with open mouth he gapes upwards or with closed mouth he blinks downwards, he will never, as I maintain, learn anything, for nothing of the kind admits of science,—his soul is looking downwards, not upwards, though he pursues his studies as he lies supine on dry land, or as he floats upon his back, in the waters of the sea.”

XI. “I am rightly punished,” he said; “for I merited your reproach. Still, I should like to know how you meant the study of astronomy must be reformed if the study is to be made profitable for the purpose which we are considering.”

“I will show you,” I said. “These decorations of the heavens, seeing that they are wrought in the visible world, we must hold to be the most beautiful and perfect of their kind, but to fall far short of that cosmos which is genuine and complete—to fall far short of the movements produced by essential speed and essential slowness, which are relative to one another, and carry with them whatever is contained in them, in the true number, and in all true figures. Now these are verily matters to

be apprehended by reason and intelligence, but not by sight. Or do you think otherwise?"

"Indeed I do not," he replied.

"We must therefore," I said, "make use of the decorations in the heavens as symbols to aid us in discovering that other beauty, just as one might discover them in the designs elaborately traced and wrought by the hand of Daedalus or some other sculptor or painter. For a geometrician, no doubt, while considering such works to be masterpieces of art, would deem it ridiculous to study them seriously with a view to finding in them the absolute truth respecting equals, doubles or any other proportion."

"That would certainly be ridiculous," he replied.

"And will not a genuine astronomer, think you, have the same thought when he looks at the movements of the stars? Whatever perfection the artist has been able to put into his works will not the astronomer expect to find in the work of Him who created the heaven and all things therein? But as to the relation of night to day, of both to the month, of the month to the year, and of the other stars to the sun and moon and to one another,—do you not believe he will hold to be foolish the man who imagines that these relations are always the same, and that they never change, when it is a question of things material and visible; and will he not deem it absurd to take no end of pains in the attempt to discover their true condition?"

"I am in perfect agreement with that view after hearing what you have just said"

"We shall then pursue astronomy, like geometry, by the help of problems which it presents; and we will take leave of the heaven and its phenomena, if we are, after the manner of true astronomers, to render useful instead of useless the intelligent part of the soul."

"You are," said he, "making the study of astronomy far more laborious than it is at present."

"Yes," I replied; "and I think we shall prescribe the same method in other subjects also, if we are to be of any use as law-givers."

XII. "But can you bring to mind some other study which is suited to our purpose?"

"I can think of none on the spur of the moment."

"Motion," I said, "as it seems to me, is surely not limited to a single form; it has many more. A learned sage might perhaps enumerate them all; but there are two which even to us are intelligible."

"Which are they?"

"We have just spoken of one," I said; "the second is its counterpart."

"What is that?"

"It would seem," said I, "that, as the eyes have been made to observe the motions of the stars, so

the ears are intended to catch harmonious movements, and these two sciences, astronomy and harmonics, are sisters, as the Pythagoreans say, and as we, Glaucon, admit, do we not?"

"Yes, we do."

"Then," I said, "since the subject before us is long and difficult, we will ask the opinion of the Pythagoreans upon these matters, and upon other questions, if any arise, but besides all that we will hold fast to our own principle."

"What principle do you mean?"

"Never to permit our pupils to attempt any study of the kind which is imperfect, and which does not invariably tend toward that point where all our researches ought invariably to end, as we were saying just now on the subject of astronomy. Or do you not know that nowadays the science of harmony  
531 suffers the same treatment as her sister? For its teachers limiting themselves to measuring audible notes and concords, one against another, labor, like the astronomers, to no purpose."

"Yes, by heaven," he said, "and in a ridiculous fashion, when they talk about their diatonic nuances, and apply their ears closely, as if they were bent on catching a sound in the neighborhood; and some of them say that they still hear an intermediate sound, and distinguish the smallest interval which must be the unit of measurement; while others contend that it is one and the same tone, both parties preferring their ears to their reason."

"You mean," said I, "those fine musicians who vex and torture<sup>15</sup> the strings, and rack them upon

the pegs. But that my similitude may not grow too tedious by dwelling upon the blows delivered with the plectrum, and the charges brought against the strings, together with their denials and effrontery, I abandon the imagery herewith, and simply say that I do not mean these men, but those <sup>15</sup> whom we just now proposed to question on the subject of harmony. For these behave just like the astronomers; that is, they seek for the number subsisting in the concords which strike the ear; but they do not rise to problems employed to discover which are harmonic numbers, and which are not, and what is the reason for the difference in each."

"You are speaking of a study that is too high for human knowledge."

"Very useful," said I, "in the quest of the beautiful and the good, but if one pursues it with other ends in view, it will prove altogether useless."

"That may well be true."

XIII. "If the pursuit of all these sciences which we have enumerated were carried far enough to reveal their mutual connection and relationship,

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<sup>15</sup> The translator once heard Ole Bull call his favorite violin an *instrument of torture*.

<sup>16</sup> The Pythagoreans.

and to show us wherein they are akin to one another, I, for my part, believe the study of them would contribute somewhat to the object we have in view, and that the labor expended upon them, which were otherwise wasted, would prove serviceable."

"I hazard the same opinion; but the work you speak of, Socrates, is very great."

"What have you in mind?" I said; "do you mean the prelude, or what? Or do we not know that all these studies are but the prelude of the strain which we must learn? For doubtless you would not hold the experts in these sciences to be dialecticians."

"Indeed I would not," he replied, "with the exception of a very few that I have met."

"But did it ever thus far seem to you that persons who are not competent to give and accept a reason will never have any knowledge of the things which we affirm they ought to know?"

"No, indeed," he replied; "that again I do not believe."

532 "Well, Glaucon," I continued, "have we not here the very hymn which dialectic performs? This is that strain, which belongs to the realm of the intelligible, but which is imitated by the faculty of sight, as we described<sup>17</sup> it, when it attempts to look at real animals, then at the stars and last of all at the sun himself. In like manner whoever by the help of dialectic, without the intervention

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<sup>17</sup> In 516 A ff.

of any of the senses, attempts to rise by reason alone to the essence of things, and does not desist until by sheer intelligence he has laid hold on the absolute good, he at last reaches the summit of the intelligible world, just as that other who beholds the sun has reached the summit of the visible world."

"Undoubtedly."

"Well then, do you not call this procedure dialectic?"

"Yes."

"But call to mind," I said, "the prisoners of the cave, their release from their chains and their transition from the shadows to the images and the light and their ascent from the underground dwelling into the sunshine; and when there, their inability still to fix their eyes directly on animals and plants and the light of the sun, whereas at first they are only able to trace in water divinely wrought reflections and shadows of things real, instead of shadows of images formed by a light which is itself nothing more than an image when compared with the sun. This gradation prefigures the power of all that study of the arts which have been mentioned, this power, I say, of elevating the noblest part of the soul to the contemplation of what is best in real existence, precisely as just now we beheld the clearest organ of the body raised to the contemplation of what is brightest in the corporeal and visible world."

"For my part," he replied, "I accept what you say; although it certainly appears to me hard to

believe, and yet, from another point of view, hard to deny. However, as our consideration of the subject need not be confined merely to the present occasion, but may claim our attention again and again, let us assume the truth of your assertion, and proceed at once to the principal strain itself, and discuss it as we have discussed the prelude. Tell us therefore what is the nature of the faculty of dialectic, into what specific parts it is divided, and what are the paths which lead to it. For these, apparently, are the ways that conduct the traveller to the goal where he may find rest from his journey and finish his course."

533 "My dear Glaucon," I replied, "you will not be able to follow me farther; although there would be no want of good will on my part; and you should no longer behold an image of that whereof we speak, but the truth itself, or at least that which seems to me to be such. Whether I would be absolutely right or not I dare not confidently affirm; but doubtless I might venture to maintain that what you would have seen could not be a mere illusion. Don't you think so?"

"Yes, indeed."

"And may I not also affirm that it is the power of dialectic that alone can reveal the truth—and to him only who is versed in the sciences which we have just now discussed, and that otherwise its attainment is impossible?"

"That also," he replied, "may be positively asserted."

"Upon one point at least every one will agree

with us, that it is some other method<sup>18</sup> which in every case endeavors to ascertain by a scientific process the true nature of each individual thing. Whereas the other arts are in general either occupied with the opinions and desires of men, or with production and construction, or are without exception directed to the care of natural and artificial products. But as to the few that are left, such as geometry and kindred sciences, which, as we were saying, are somehow related to real existence, we see how they merely dream about being, but can never behold it as a waking reality, so long as they employ hypotheses which they pass over unexamined, and of which they are unable to give any account. For when one does not know his premises, and when his conclusion and intermediate steps are made up of he knows not what, how can such consistency (or agreement) ever constitute a science?"

"That is impossible."

XIV. "Well then," said I, "the dialectic method alone, by discarding hypotheses, proceeds directly to the actual first principle, in order to attain secure results; and the eye of the soul, which is actually buried in a barbarian swamp, it gently

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<sup>18</sup> Dialectic, and not the five sciences enumerated.

draws and raises upwards, using as handmaids and helpers in the work of conversion the sciences which we have discussed. These, in conformity with custom, we have often called sciences, but they should have some other name intermediate between the obscurity of opinion and the clearness of science; and this farther back<sup>19</sup> in the course of our conversation was termed understanding. But, as I think, we must not dispute about names, while we have awaiting us matters of such importance to be considered."

"That," he said, "is rightly spoken; [we only need a term which when applied to a mental state shall clearly indicate what concept it describes.]"

"At any rate," I proceeded, "it is sufficient for us, as before,<sup>20</sup> to call the first of the four divisions science, the second understanding, the third belief, and the fourth conjecture,—opinion standing  
534 for the two latter collectively considered, intelligence for the two former. Opinion is concerned with becoming, intelligence with being; and as being is to becoming, so is intelligence to opinion; and as intelligence is to opinion, so is science to belief and understanding to conjecture. But let us, Glaucon, omit the proportion of the subjects to which these terms apply, the subjects, I mean, of opinion and intelligence, and the subdivision in detail of each one of them, lest we become in-

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<sup>19</sup> In Book VI, 511 D.

<sup>20</sup> At the end of Book VI.

volved in discussions longer by far than the foregoing."

"Well, Socrates, for my part, I certainly agree with what you have just said, so far as I am able to follow you."

"And further, do you call by the name 'dialectician' the man who takes account of the essence of each thing? And if he is unable to do this, so far as he can not give to himself and to others an account of such inherent quality will you to that extent deny that he possesses intelligence on the subject?"

"How can I fail to deny it?"

"Then you will say it is the same with the good. When a man cannot define the idea of good by a reasoning process, abstracting it from all else, and when he does not, as though in a battle, make his way through all objections, eager to apply the tests, not by appealing to the opinion, but to reality, and is unable to come out of the conflict with his logic unvanquished; will you not maintain that the man thus handicapped knows neither the idea of good nor any good at all; but if he have laid hold of any image of it, he owes this to opinion and not to science, and that dreaming and slumbering through his present life, before ever awaking in this world, he is gone to the other for his final sleep?"

"Yes, indeed," he said; "in all that I shall agree with you perfectly."

"But doubtless, as regards the children of your ideal State, whose education you are conducting

theoretically, if some day you shall give them practical training, you will not, I suppose, suffer them to be, as it were, mere irrational quantities, when they are to rule in the city and control the highest interests."

"Certainly not."

"Will you then make it a law that they shall apply themselves particularly to that science which shall enable them to attain the highest skill in asking and answering questions?"

"I shall do so," he said, "with your help."

535 "Do you then believe that dialectic is to be set as the coping-stone on top of our educational structure, and that we can rightly place no other science higher than this, but that our system of the sciences is now complete?"

"Indeed I do."

XV. "Well then," I proceeded, "it only remains for you to determine the principle of distribution, to whom we shall assign these studies, and in what way we shall apportion them."

"That is clear," he replied.

"Do you then remember what kind of men we selected when we were first<sup>21</sup> choosing rulers?"

"Certainly I remember."

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<sup>21</sup> In Book III, 412 B ff.

"I would have you then further grant that men of the character we mentioned must be chosen, that we should prefer the staunchest, the bravest, and, as far as possible, the fairest. And, more than this, we must not only require them to be endowed with a noble and steadfast nature, but also to possess traits which are suitable to the education which we intend to give them."

"What are these traits?"

"Insight," I said, "my excellent friend, essential to the comprehension of the sciences and facility in learning. For the mind is far more likely to lose courage from the difficulties of study than from those of gymnastics; because here the toil belongs more exclusively to the mind, being limited to it, and not shared by the body."

"That is true," he replied.

"Hence the man whom we seek must have a good memory, must be indefatigable, and a lover of every kind of labor. Else how can you expect a man willingly to endure all the bodily exercises, and to stand the strain of the hard thinking and study required of him?"

"I think no one will, unless he is endowed with rare natural gifts."

"The mistake which people nowadays make about philosophy, and the contempt into which she has fallen, may, as we before<sup>22</sup> observed, be explained from the fact that those who turn to philosophy do so unworthily; whereas her votaries

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<sup>22</sup> In VI, 495 C — 496 A.

should not be bastards, but true and genuine sons."

"What do you mean?" he asked.

"In the first place, her votary, as regards his love of labor, should not be ready-to-halt—that is to say, he should not be half laborious and half indolent; and this is what actually happens when a man is a lover of gymnastics and the chase, and is strenuous in the practice of all sorts of bodily exercises, but shows no taste for study, and has an aversion for listening and inquiry, and fears all intellectual labor. Contrariwise he also is lame whose love of work has taken the opposite turn."

"Nothing can be more true," he replied.

"And in respect of truth," I said, "shall we not in like manner consider a soul halt and maimed, which hates voluntary falsehood, and can neither endure it without loathing in herself, nor without indignation in others, yet readily tolerates involuntary falsehood, and indulging in ignorance is not abashed at being detected, but is content to wallow therein like a swinish beast in the mire?"

536 "You are certainly right."

"Furthermore," I continued, "we ought to give the most earnest heed to distinguish the true son from the baseborn with reference to temperance, courage, magnanimity and the other virtues. For whenever they are unable to make the distinctions that relate to these matters, individuals and states unwittingly, in every such event, commit their interests to cripples and bastards, to friends in the one case, and in the other to magistrates."

"That is quite true," he said.

"Therefore in all such things we must be on our guard; for if we shall introduce to these high studies and severe exercises and train therein only those of sound body and mind, justice herself will have no fault to find with us, and we shall save the State and defend the constitution; but if we shall bring to these tasks men of the opposite stamp, not only shall we meet with an experience altogether different from the first, but we shall also draw down upon philosophy a still greater storm of ridicule."

"That would be indeed shameful," he replied.

"No doubt," I said; "but quite likely I proved to be equally ridiculous just now."

"How is that?" he asked.

"I had forgotten," said I, "that we were jesting, and spoke a little too intensely. But while speaking I fixed my eyes upon philosophy, and seeing her treated with undeserved contumely, I was, in consequence, probably too indignant, and, in my anger at those who were to blame for it, I expressed myself too vehemently."

"No indeed," he replied; "at any rate, while listening I did not think so."

"Well, my own opinion is that as speaker I did go to extremes. And now let us remember that, while in our first selection,<sup>23</sup> we made choice of old men, such a choice will not be possible now. Let us not believe Solon when he says that a man, when he grows old, can learn many things. Where-

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<sup>23</sup> See III, 412 C.

as he will be less able to do this than to run; for it is to the young that labors abundant and arduous wholly belong."

" True beyond all question."

XVI. " Therefore instruction in arithmetic, geometry and the other preliminary branches which are to lead up to dialectic must be given to our pupils in their youth. However, we should see to it that we have nothing in our educational scheme which makes learning compulsory."<sup>24</sup>

" Why not? "

" Because," I said, " a freeman ought not to learn anything like a slave. For bodily exercises although compulsory do the body no more harm than if they were voluntary; but no knowledge acquired under compulsion proves a lasting possession to the mind."

" Quite true."

537 " Do not then, my good friend, employ force in educating the children, but make their study a sort of play, so that you may, at the same time, be better able in each case to discern their natural aptitude."

" What you say certainly stands to reason."

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<sup>24</sup> Compare Theognis, 72: Every compulsory matter is disagreeable.

"Do you remember our saying that the children too must be led to war on horseback, must become spectators of actual fighting, and, wherever it could be done without danger, must be brought into action, and, like the young hounds of the pack, be given a taste of blood?"

"Yes, I remember."

"We must therefore," I said, "enroll in a class apart from the others those who show themselves readiest in labors, keenest in studies, and bravest in dangers."

"At what age?" he asked.

"When they have done with their course of required gymnastics; for the time, whether of two or three years, devoted to these exercises admits of no other occupations, fatigue and sleep being incompatible with learning; and, besides, the trial designed to show how each youth ranks in his gymnastics is not the least important part of his education."

"Certainly not," he replied.

"After this time therefore," I proceeded, "those who in their twentieth year are chosen as the best will receive greater honors than the others, and the studies which, in the earlier stages of their education, they have pursued piecemeal, must now be brought together and presented to them from the point of view of the kinship of the studies with one another and with the nature of being."

"At all events," he replied, "this is the only kind of learning which will make a lasting impression upon the mind."

"Yes," I said, "and it affords the principal means of discriminating the dialectic nature from its opposite; for in proportion as a man's mind has, or has not, a comprehensive outlook, he is, or is not, a dialectician."

"I agree with you," he replied.

"To this then," I continued, "you will have to give heed; and whoever among them are found to be most steadfast in their studies, most steadfast in war, and in other matters prescribed by law, these again, when they have reached the age of thirty, you will have to choose out of the class already preferred before the others, to advance them to higher honors, testing them by the power of dialectic, in order to discover which of them, discarding the use of sight and other senses, and, under the sole guidance of truth, is able to rise to the knowledge of absolute being; and just here, my friend, there is need of great caution."

"Why so?" he asked.

"Do you not perceive," I said, "with how great evil the study of dialectic is at present attended?"

"What evil?" he asked.

"Our dialecticians are filled with lawlessness."

"You are right."

"Well," I proceeded, "do you think anything very surprising has happened to them, and will you not find an excuse for them?"

"How find an excuse?"

"Let us imagine," I said, "by way of parallel, the case of a supposititious son, who, being brought up in abundant wealth, as one of a great and noble

family, and surrounded by a host of flatterers, 538 should, on reaching manhood, learn that he is not the child of those who profess to be his parents, but should be unable to discover who his real parents are. Can you guess what his feeling would be towards his flatterers and his supposed parents, first while he was ignorant of the substitution, and then after he learned the fact? Or would you like to hear what I think about it?"

"Yes, I should."

XVII. "Then I fancy that, while he was ignorant of the truth, he would have more respect for his father, his mother, and those whom he believed to be his relatives, than for his flatterers; that he would be more inclined to help them when they were in need; that he would be less likely to thwart them in word or action, and that in essential matters he would show himself less disobedient to them than to his flatterers."

"Naturally," he replied.

"But, I imagine, as soon as he has learned the truth, his respect and regard for them would be lessened, while his esteem for his flatterers would be increased; he would give heed to the counsel of the latter more readily than before; he would adopt their manner of life and associate with them openly, but, unless he were gifted by nature with excep-

tional wisdom, he would scarcely concern himself about his supposed father and his other reputed kinsmen."

"All that would happen as you say. But how does this comparison apply to those who are occupied with dialectic?"

"In this way: we have, I suppose, from childhood certain opinions about justice and honor, under the influence of which we have been brought up, obeying and honoring them, just as we yield obedience to parents."

"Yes, we have."

"Now there are opposed to these opinions certain seductive habits, which flatter our soul, and attract it, which, however, fail to persuade those who have an adequate perception of right; but such persons honor the paternal maxims and conform to them."

"That is true."

"Well now, if the spirit of inquiry shall supervene and ask of the man thus disposed what is honorable, and, upon his making the answer which he used to hear from the legislator, the reasoning process shall confute him, and, by dint of oft-repeated and various defeats, shall lead him to believe that what he calls honorable is no more honorable than base, and shall confuse him in like manner in regard to justice, goodness and things which he held most in honor,—after this what, think you, respecting all these things, will become of his former habits of reverence and obedience?"

"They will surely suffer a decline."

"But when he no longer esteems the maxims he once honored, and severs the tie which formerly bound him to them, without, however, discovering the true principles, can he be expected to betake himself to any other than the flattering life?" 539

"Impossible," he replied.

"And thus, while he was before law-abiding, he will now have become lawless."

"Undoubtedly."

"Well now, the condition of those who in this way apply themselves to dialectic is very natural, and, as I was saying just now,<sup>25</sup> is certainly pardonable."

"Yes," he replied, "and pitiable."

"Therefore that you may not come to feel this pity for these men who are now thirty years of age, must you not exercise the greatest care before introducing them to the study of dialectic?"

"Certainly I must."

"And is not this an important precaution that they be not allowed to dabble in dialectic, when they are too young? For I suppose it has not escaped your notice that the youngsters, when they for the first time get a taste of dialectic, abuse it as mere child's play, always contradicting, and, after the manner of those who refute them, they themselves refute others in turn; like puppies they take delight in pulling and tearing to pieces with their logic any who come near them."

"They certainly play fantastic tricks."

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<sup>25</sup> Compare 537 E.

"And when they have met opposing disputants in many encounters, and have been now the victors and now the vanquished, they fall violently and speedily into the habit of believing nothing that they believed before; and, in consequence, they bring themselves and the whole cause of philosophy into ill repute with the rest of the world."

"Perfectly true," he replied.

"But the man of riper years," I said, "will have no part in such madness; he will imitate those who employ dialectic in earnest and aim at discovering the truth rather than those who for the sake of amusement play the sophist and contradict; and thus, in view of his greater moderation, instead of degrading his pursuit, he will bring it into higher honor."

"Quite true," he said.

"And therefore has not all that has been said before respecting this provision<sup>26</sup> been urged by way of caution, to the end that we may admit to the practice of dialectic only such students as are orderly and steadfast, instead of admitting, as is the custom of the present day, the first chance aspirant that presents himself even though he has no aptitude for philosophy?"

"Yes indeed," he said.

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<sup>26</sup> Against the premature study of dialectic: See 539 B.

XVIII. "Will it be sufficient for a man to give twice as much time to philosophy as he has given to gymnastic, to apply himself to dialectic as constantly and exclusively as he formerly did to bodily exercise?"

"How many years do you mean? Six or four?"

"No matter which," I replied. "Make it five. But at the end of this time you must send them down again into the cave, and compel them to be leaders in war, and to hold any offices whatsoever which befit young men, so that tested by experience they may not fall behind their neighbors. And here again they must be put to the proof to ascertain whether amid the distractions which beset them on every side they will stand fast, or flinch."

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"But how long," he asked, "would you have this period of their lives continue?"

"Fifteen years," I answered.

"Then at length must those who in their fiftieth year have come safely through these ordeals, and have proved themselves every way the best in all things, whether in the activities of life, or in the sciences, be brought to their full fruition, and must be compelled to direct the radiant light of the soul upward, and to look at that which gives light to all; and after they have beheld the absolute good, they must employ that as a pattern, each of them in their turn, in ruling the State, in regulating the conduct of individuals, and in governing themselves all the rest of their lives; being occupied for the most part with the study of philosophy, but, when their turn comes, assuming the burden of politics,

